Rev. M. P. Wilkin
with regards of the Author.

The MARVEL of SPIRITUAL LIFE.

A

Sermon of the Methodist Centennial.

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OF THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

At Fairfield, Ill., September 27th, 1884,

BY ROBERT ALLYN.

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THE MARVEL OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

"Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob. neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time shall it be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?"—Numbers xxiii, 23.

"But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us."—2 Corinthians x, 13.

These two passages from our Holy Book suggest a lesson for the hour and encourage some pardonable exultation over the marvelous growth of our beloved church. As we study the real causes of such a wonder of power as this, they allow a certain confidence in the continuance of the Divine blessing. No time need be spent on the exposition or history of either text. It is enough to say that St. Paul did not fear to state what he believed to be the facts of the mighty power of the religion of Jesus and of its miraculous growth in the individual heart and among the nations. He did not scruple to boast of what God had wrought in his day and of the transforming force of this revealed gospel as it was given to him from heaven, with the assurance that it should spread and triumph gloriously in the earth. His only caution is that this boasting shall be according to the rule which God himself has laid down. This is indeed no narrow limit, for it is always according to the "effectual working of the mighty power of the living God," and "beyond all that we ask or think."

The other verse quoted contains the words of unwilling eulogy wrung from a scheming enemy, and it, in fact, exactly states the current opinion of the world concerning our blessed Christianity. Time has proved that human opposition is harmless against all forms of it, because every agency which seeks its overthrow, or even its limitation, is at last reluctantly compelled to confess that God has wrought its increase and made sure its final victory. Any church organization whose members have faith in God and hold that faith in love which works for the good of men, may rely on omnipotent power to keep it alive and make it grow; and it may also boast according to the measure of blessing which he hath distributed to it.

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We need not, therefore, hesitate, if the spirit move us, to utter a few Alleluiahs to-day as we commemorate the hundred years of our unity, under the rule of one discipline, administered by one board of itinerant bishops. And no man should reproach us if we speak with a modest confidence of our expectations for the future. A century has demonstrated that God owns our methods with a measure of success which has been reached by no other body of christian workers. Our standards of doctrine have suffered nothing from changes, and our system of operations is now almost the same as at the very beginning. None of these are by any means as singular as they formerly seemed, for nearly all denominations have adopted many of them with slight modifications, and we may safely say all admire them. Let us then be duly joyful and give to the Master the praise of all we claim to have done; but let us not withhold a fair statement of the good works we have already accomplished and under God hope hereafter to do.

Methodism, as a form of Protestant religion, or as a movement to promote the interests of Christianity, or as an effort to "spread scriptural holiness" over the world, is not yet a hundred and sixty years from its cradle, where the Wesleys rocked it in Christ College, Oxford. Men and women now living and in active business can look back and recall the whole half of its life and work. The eyes of every one seventy-eight years old have seen the best half of its progress from its germ, the Holy Club, in 1729. Our sainted Simpson, so lately translated, was born almost exactly in the middle era of its progress, counting from the real conversion of John Wesley and the formation of classes in 1739 and running down to our times, and his glorious life of power and eloquence has covered the period of its greatest growth. In the year of the Bishop's birth the Illinois District appears to have been formed, though circuit riders had for several years traveled the territory occupied by our conference. The whole church in 1811 had less than 200,000 members. It had been a body with a head and a policy less than thirty years, and as a movement in America to convert men it was then not fifty years old. Barbary Heck, Philip Embury, Robert Strawbridge and Captain Webb had begun their work in 1766, and their successors had followed the settlers wherever they had set up their cabins. In 1784 the Methodist ministers, assembled in Baltimore, accepted or elected two Bishops and recognized themselves men truly and properly ordained as Christian apostles, divinely chosen by God's spirit and duly empowered to preach, to baptize, to administer sacraments and to gather men into a church organization. For eighteen years they had been converting the people and forming classes or societies, and

they had inducted into these eighteen thousand souls. Their own number was one hundred and four. They had scattered themselves from New York to Georgia in fifty-two circuits or appointments, no one of which touched the Alleghanies. Not a man of all these one hundred and four was to set foot in New England that year or to tread the wilderness which hid the noblest valley of the world.

To-day the number both of members and preachers has been multiplied by a hundred who remain in our own communion, and by at least two hundred, if we count all the Methodistic bodies in the land, and probably by five hundred, if we number their converts who have entered and regenerated our sister churches. That is a growth beyond anything in ecclesiastical history, not even excepting the apostolic church of the first centuries. And if we reckon--as justice demands that we ought to do--our hearers, who, in not a few cases are as much christianized as some of our actual members, we shall bring the numbers of our church's converts and adherents up to about twelve millions. Our church has this year in its temples of worship more than twelve and a half millions of sittings and is adding to them at the rate of two thousand a month. This indicates that we hold ourselves responsible already for the spiritual instruction and moral discipline of at least one-fourth of the population of the nation. The various bodies who hold our forms of belief and usage, by their differing names and races, black and white, native and foreign, do give in this country ithe relgious training, more or less, of one in four of all our people. It is a burdensome duty and a marvel of religious growth. The increase exceeds that of the population in a large degree. In 1790, six years after our church organization, the nation counted almost 4,000,000, and we 57,631, with 227 preachers, having in those six years multiplied the membership by three and the ministry by two. The nation has since multiplied itself by fourteen; our special branch of Methodism has increased over thirty-fold, and all its several offshoots have grown to a hundred-fold. Our progress in other particulars, as, for instance, in the main elements of the desirable characteristics of a church, vital piety, or genuine religious life in the soul and purity of morals, general benevolence and philanthropy, charity in heart and speech and kindly intercourse with neighbors, cannot be so readily calculated in figures. We can only estimate the relative amount of these by some general considerations.

That we are more truly intelligent may be inferred, in part at least, from the number and patronage of our colleges and from the emphatic manner in which our people stand by the public schools. That we have grown in wealth and in social influence and refine-

ment needs no proof. From being a sect everywhere distrusted and ridiculed, and often derided for illiteracy, we are to-day honored as the equal of any and counted as the most powerful. That we have become more systematic and liberal in benevolences need not be said so long as our philanthropic and educational, our charitable and missionary enterprises collect and disburse annually not less than $1,500,000, and all are managed in a most admirably efficient way.

Sum up our denominational progress since 1766, or from the day when, in 1769, the twenty-sixth British Wesleyan Conference raised fifty-two pounds to send Joseph Pillmore and Richard Boardman to America, or from the Christmas when Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were accepted and elected Bishops, and the history is a marvel in whatever light it is seen. Look at the one germ planted in Episcopal New York by Barbara Heck and Philip Embury, another dropped by Captain James Webb in Quaker Philadelphia, and the other sown by Robert Strawbridge in Catholic Maryland, and see to what the harvest has grown! The fruit shakes like Lebanon. The mountain of the Lord's house is already exalted above the hill-tops and all the nations read by the light its summit bears. These sparks of grace kindled in the hearts of the lowly have carried their fires around the globe, and their beacons blaze in every land and in almost every province and city of earth. Every year our Bishops circle the world in their travels and lay our obligations to preach on hearts of every race of men. Every living language of power, saving the barbarous Russian, tells our version of scriptural holiness. The strong German, the rugged Norse, the polished French, the stately Spanish, the old philosophical Sanskrit, the modern Hindu, the conservative Chinese and the progressive tongue of Japan, all vie with the cosmopolitan English of commerce to preach our doctrine of life and power. We are now knocking at the gates of isolated Corea and driving our wedges of joy into the rift between Turkey and Russia, where Roumania and Wallachia are demanding political independence. The "effectual doors" are open to us wide as the chambers of the east to the beams of the morning sun, and no shades of western night are shut against our songs and our prayers, our hallelujahs and amens, which keep pace with the dawn and travel with the day round the globe. Like the carols of waking birds, our hymns accompany the morning stars in their early marches, intermitting their melodies no more than those stars veil their fires in the sky. Every tongue of babbling earth can speak and every ear can hear our free, social, jubilant gospel of full salvation, and the world exults in it. What has caused all this?

First and more than all else, indeed the all, the essence of the whole, has been our soul-life, the Holy Ghost creating in our individual members a spiritual or divine life. The first Methodists were alive; had Christ's life in them; were set on fire from above, and cherishing that holy flame in themselves, they set other hearts on fire. The secret of all their stability, when less than a dozen were left alone amidst the temptations of the great cities and their wickedness, was this strange marvel--spiritual life.

It has been the wonder of the ages that truth and virtue, justice and honor survive the discouragements of vice and sin in this world at any time, and that love and reverence for law, and faith and obedience to an unseen power as God, should abide amidst indifference and ridicule, opposition and active persecution, is an astounding problem. But that this divine life in the human heart should thrive at all in this sin-governed earth and at length be able to propagate itself into other hearts, is greater than a miracle. It has been reserved for our day and for our church to give the most striking example of this wonder-working power, one so overwhelming that it might almost astonish a sanhedrim of the angels. Nothing but the promise of the Master, "I will be in you," "I am your life," could have given our people this power. The few members to whom Embury and Strawbridge preached, and who gathered and prayed and talked of their religious experiences, with the divine life in their souls, did not simply believe in the necessity or the possibility, or the power or glory of regeneration, or of the life of Christ divinely given to the soul. They had felt this life and knew it each for himself, not by any hear-say or inference. The visitation and incoming of the divine spirit had been to them as real and perceptible in their hearts as was the finger of the angel which touched the sinew of Jacob's thigh and left it out of joint. Every soul of them, preacher and people, realized what a new life was, and they were not afraid nor ashamed to tell it. To them conversion meant something more than a change of purpose, no matter how deliberate or decided; or an election to life eternal, no matter how certain or how ennobling; or than a possibility of attaining an assurance of acceptance with the Spirit of the Highest. It meant God and Christ in the nature and the fullness of joy in consequence. By this life they lived, and by its power they also spread their doctrines and their usages.

The maxim that "all life grows only from life," is as true in religion as in nature. Nowhere is there a case of spontaneous generation proved. Life alone begets life in vegetable or animal. The Divine Spirit begets the spiritual life in the soul of man, and this attracts and continues life. Children of God by the new birth are

thus brought together and a church is formed. By these human spiritual lives others are warmed into desire and the spirit again breathes life. It is as in the beginning, when the Elohim breathed the breath of life into Adam and he became a living soul. Then, as now, in order to create a master and lord of the world something more was necessary than clay fashioned by divine skill and power. A living God must inspire or breathe into the curiously wrought mechanism his own spiritual force and fire, his own energy and life. So our church from its first origin believed and practiced, never hesitating to declare this fruitful truth and never allowing it to be forgotten or ignored that man is nothing unless born of God and holding fast to the life of Christ in the soul. This practical belief carried into daily duty gave the religious world a new impulse. It fired a host of men to brave every privation in order to preach this great practical, vital truth, and it moved men and women to proclaim it till the land was vocal with the sound of full salvation through Christ.

The power of life is a marvel everywhere and in every form in which it can appear. Seek to know the difference between a bit of marble and an acorn. Analyze them in a chemist's laboratory and you find them not so very diverse in their elements—calcium and oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen and oxygen. Put them into an acid. The marble effervesces, foams and finally dissolves. The acorn scarcely shows a sign of change. But cover them in spring time with moist earth and supply them with a proper degree of warmth; the acorn soon sends up a plume of verdant life that lays its hands on materials wrested from air, water, earth and sunlight, and rises in a beauty as fresh as the dew, making for itself a garment of glory and a body of power which adorn the landscape with living nobility, and after a century of wrestling with winds and frosts it has built a tree which gives the mechanic the keel or ribs of a ship to carry the merchant's commercial treasures around the world. The marble has crumbled and mingled with the common dust of the wayside. In what is the difference? IN THE LIFE ALONE.

Take that same acorn and an egg. Give both the proper conditions of heat and position and mark. The acorn sends up its plume of verdure as before and remains fixed to its place in the soil; but from the egg there comes more than a thing of beauty—a life which puts on wings and traverses the air of all climes, a delight and an inspiration. What is the difference? Life again; but how diverse! Now contrast that bird with a man. See how knowledge and reason in him carry him, not through the air, but still above the flight of the bird as far as the clouds sail above the hills. It is life still,

but intellectual life now; a life which knows, and therefore aspires. This life has another power of higher adjustments, so that it can adapt itself to changing conditions and make apparently adverse circumstances contribute to its real advantage. It can use the lime and earth or rocks to build a shelter for itself, or to help separate iron from its oxides, and can, by heat and artful working, make this into steel and thence into tools which shall increase his power a thousand-fold. Dead matter is made the servant of man, and vegetable and animal life seem to compete with each other gladly to add to his power and intelligence and increase the ability of human reason and force to do all things. Indeed, man's life seems to find no limit to its conquests save the strength of the materials or the time it can command. This life of intelligence and reason has filled the world with marvels of gardens and orchards, of fruitful fields and groaning harvests; of cities and architecture, of sculpture, painting, music, oratory and poetry. It has erected civil governments, how admirable, and covered the globe with agencies to secure comforts to every man, woman and child of the race. See how it provides blessings in homes and opportunities of improvement and refinement by joining all lands and subduing all seas with railways and steamships and telegraphs. It leads toward an unimagined paradise of progress and perfection; but it may be accompanied, as in Greece and Egypt of old, or in Judea and Turkey of to-day, by a hate of purity and a disregard of truth and right appalling to humanity.

There is, however, still another life—that imparted by the Divine Spirit—which is as much higher than this noble intellectual life as the sky is above Chimborazo, or as a man is higher in rank than an oak. And it has been the special mission of Methodism to proclaim the necessity of this life, to exemplify its beauty and its power, and to compel the people to recognize its excellence. How shall this life be described? How can one who has not been born into it and therefore has not felt the thrill of joy and power which it brings, know what it is and what it signifies? Can a bird or a beast comprehend the delight of the poet as he beholds a sunrise adorned with the thousand glories of earth and sky, and takes in the grandeur of morning as it opens on the sight through the gates of the east? The animal may dance and sing and exult with pleasure, but what can it know of anything that does more than stir the physical frame? A clod might as well be expected to feel the throbs of life which run through the wings of the eagle as she beats the air above the mountain in the morning and seeks food for her young over half a continent, as that an earthly mind should know the fullness of com-

fort and peace and joy, and life and love that overpowers and re-creates the soul of a man when the divine life enters the human and seals it the child of God. Earthly distinctions, imperial relationships, scientific attainments and honors, all fade before such a Fatherhood owning as his son the man who has given his heart to truth and to Christ.

When Methodism first began its mission in the land the knowledge of this blessed life had by no means been lost to the world. But ever since there had been promulgated that grand epic of fatalism expounded by Calvin--that logical fiction of predestination, the deepest and noblest of mere human speculations, except pantheism, which is more magnificent and more reasonable—and it had dominated the religious thought of the world, Christians had been forgetting the real conscious presence of the life of God in the soul. Not that they denied the new birth or regeneration. By no means. They had in a way emphasized it; but at the same time they had assumed the impossibility of knowing when it was implanted, or that it was in the soul at all. The old Puritans knew that they were the elect and were therefore possessors of all things. But their descendants insisted that it was simply presumption to claim to know, before death, an assured heirship. Life immortal, life divine, could be known only by dying; and this dogma and this practice made genuine, joyous religion a myth in the world and a gloom in social affairs and human conduct.

Methodism came with the boldest, most aggressive denial of such a statement and affirmed that Jesus died to give life, and that he gave it not only freely, but as a fire from heaven; that he not only regenerates the soul into newness of life, but gives the knowledge of that life and that regeneration with joy and power. It asserted a spiritual life, imparted by the Holy Ghost and consciously known, joyously, rapturously felt, as unmistakably, but more exultingly than the thrill of health returning after sickness, and it demanded that every one of its adherents should experimentally know that he had this life. It must be by no inference, or hope or persuasion. It must be a heaven-assured certainty as firmly seated in the soul as sensation is in the physical nature. Paul could say, "I know that I live, because Christ liveth in me," and every early Methodist must say the same and know it like a fire shut up in the bones.

Descartes once astonished the world, and even philosophy herself, by his simple affirmation, "I think therefore I am." It was to be at once a demonstration of existence, of mind and finally of God. The original Methodists did better than that. They said: "I love, therefore I live;" and because they lived, having been dead, they knew

that Jesus Christ lived. For how could dead souls live unless they had been raised to life by divine power? Life can only grow from life. We do live. Therefore there is a fountain of life. So they lived and sang:

"Fountain of Life to all below,
Let thy salvation roll;
Water, replenish and o'erflow
Every believing soul.
The well of Life to us thou art,
Of joy, the swelling flood,
Wafted by Thee, with willing heart,
We swift return to God."

This life of the Holy Ghost in the soul, or more truly, this new creating of the human nature with Christ as an essential part or element of it, was the one prime idea or practical declaration of Methodism, its contribution to Christian theology and individual experience.

You may talk of the secret of Methodism. It has no secret. Life is its power. Can you hide a live child born into a happy, expectant family? There is no secret in such a case. You cannot suppress the noise it will make nor the joy it will create. It is a new life in the household and it proclaims itself and is a promise of still fuller joy, and everybody rejoices to hear its proclamation of its new life. You may speculate about the philosophy of Methodism, as Isaac Taylor did and as ambitious critics sometimes do. It has no philoshphy in the sense of scientific explanation other than the simple "I have begotten you," of the Lord of Life, and, "Because I live you shall live also." Life, LIFE, spiritual life! eternal life! God's divine life in the nature! This is all the secret; this is all the philosophy there is or can be. It is the life of God and Christ and the Holy Ghost in the man, making him a new creature such as Paul wrote and spoke of, such as the church of all ages has demanded.

Methodism was therefore no protest against ecclesiastical intolerance. It was life in place of ceremony; regeneration as against formalism; supernal power in the heart as against the death of mere legal duty. And it proclaimed its message in all ears and by every instrumentality, insisting that never one of its living sons or daughters shall dare to keep silence. It would as soon expect a bob-o-link to be mute when June sunshine and fragrance are filling the meadows which give food and shelter to his mate and nestlings, as to allow a soul of man, woman or child, filled for the first time with this divine life, to hold his peace. Is he not raised from the dead? and how can his spiritual, social, glorious life be silent?

"Jesus all the day long
Is his joy and his song,
So that all this salvation might see,
He hath loved me, each cried,
He hath suffered and died
And brought life to a rebel like me.

Oh, the rapturous height
Of that holy delight
Which they felt in the life-giving blood;
Of their Savior possessed,
They were perfectly blessed,
And were filled with the fullness of God."

"The fullness of God!" O, the sublime audacity of Christian faith and love! "All the fullness of God!" To claim such a stretch of privilege as this infinity! It is Paul's own word, spoken, too, by divine command. Our church has never been afraid of its daring nor of its mysticism either. Our fathers insisted on its use and shouted it aloud, because the life of God—all the life of God—was in them, and was felt as the trees feel the spring time, or as the birds feel the coming of summer. You may just as well fear that roses will refuse to bourgeon forth under the skies of May, or robins forget to build nests in April, or grapes hesitate to ripen in the sweet air of August, as that converted souls shall mope and pine and despair and never tell their joys when Christ lives in them. These old-time Methodists had a new, a divine, a spiritual life, and they knew it, and they did not fail to let the world know it; and the country very soon acknowledged that all men needed it and hungered for it. So it spread like a prairie fire in a windy September, and still it wins its widening way. The Lord renew this fire and revive this life, and help us to send it forward till it shall burn round the world and consume all sin!

This life is the one element of all our success. It is more than all our achievements as a church, or than all our hundred years of history, exalted in grandeur as that is, for it alone has made the heroic deeds of our ministers and members a possibility and their record a page of such brilliant glory. It has gathered and held together the two millions of our present membership and helped them to convert the three millions more who have entered other churches to fill them with this new life of God in the soul, and every Sabbath day it draws to our chapels ten millions to listen to the story of this supernatural life-power. May not one of our preachers be ashamed to tell it, nor one of our members be afraid to proclaim it! It alone has made us a church which girdles the globe with its altars of prayer and which daily makes every circling hour vocal with ex-

ultant songs of divine life. The Master help us never to lose one note of that song nor abate an iota of its emphasis or joy. Indeed this exultant power in the soul of man is the hidden life of God in the nature, and its vocal expressions and heart-felt devotion make our earth as it flies through the heaven, a symbolic censer of prayerful incense, daily swung in the temple of the universe as an offering of praise to the Triune God and Saviour of men. But the life, the life itself is more than all; it is the marvel of the ages, the promise and security of all to come. Without it any church is dead and any generation hopeless. We must keep it throbbing in our souls or we perish, and unless we proclaim it, our mission is ended. At our General Conference, now truly ecumenical, or world embracing, we may gather the men of all the races, and hear them speak "all the tongues Babel was cleft into," as Milton has it, but what would the tongues of men or of angels avail or profit, if this life of God, this love which is life were wanting? We may heap our altars with sacrifices of money, men, talent, good works, high as our church steeples, calling on every preacher in every conference to know if he last turn has been given to the well-adjusted society screws, designed to press out oil to lubricate some part of our complicated machinery, so cunningly constructed to relieve individuals of personal responsiblity for the humane charities of conduct. What is it all worth? Much every way, as St. Paul says in another sense. But so far as genuine life is concerned, absolutely nothing. The whole church machinery for reading, singing, praying, preaching, may yet be run by some steam engine which warms the room, and unless we keep this holy divine life in our hearts, such an engine would be as good as preachers and choir and congregation too. Without spiritual life behind all our exercises the steam engine will be the better agency, for it will exactly obey Gods' physical law and has never been put under obligations to obey a higher one of duty. Give us the old life and power or we are nothing. The grandest successes of eloquence or learning, the noblest offerings of talents or services, if spiritual power be not the moving impulse, will only reveal our poverty and wretchedness. We shall then be merely beggars in rags and sickness, and all our public performances will but make our death and uselessness the more disgusting. We may build a score of churches every seven days and fill them with crowds of kneeling worshippers who shall be entranced by the logic, the science and eloquence of silver-tongued preachers, or bewitched by the heaven sweeping music of voice or organ. We may gather millions of children in our Sunday Schools and teach them to keep intelluctual step with the whole world in reciting international scriptural lessons, arranged by that most wond-

erful organizer, Dr. Vincent, the peer of any general or statesman of the nations, and what will it all be worth if the spiritual life of heart and soul be not maintained in all its pristine power? Or more properly if it shall not be increased? If the church in multiplying her numbers, in giving birth to her children, shall herself die, and in the agony of her disappointment shall be constrained to name those children Ichabods, what millions, though multipled by millions, will console us for the loss of this ark of our covenant, this life of the Mighty God in the soul. Thanks to the Father of all life we have not yet lost this good power of christian life!

Let us now proceed to consider that this life in the souls of our members has had a most potent influence on our doctrines and also on our usages, or institutions, on our whole economy; indeed it has really shaped them all, the creeds we hold, our modes of worship, our system of organization into classes, churches, circuits, districts, in fact our whole history. It will always be the case that life will regulate all, will fashion a body to suit its wants and will control the functions of that body. Even the latest statement of the evolution doctrine declares that "life precedes organization" and that "consciousness must go before a plan or purpose of improvement." But let it first be said that none of our doctrines are what may be properly called new or peculiar. They were preached by Peter, defended by Paul and James, and recommended and illustrated by John, the elder Gaius and the elect lady. Chrysostom and Augustine and Luther and Calvin substantially expounded them. Only our emphatic insistenc on the fact of the spiritual life, already spoken of, made them appear singular. They are the same old gospel of salvation and life through Christ. Modern science affirms that force may show itself in a thousand ways and still be the same power. And religious life may reveal itself in many forms and be the same life of God in the soul though called by different names and having different modifications.

1. Our doctrine of sin has been very pronounced, and while we always insisted on the fact of a hereditary depravity in itself so great as to be hopeless for the individual man, we have strenuously insisted that only a conscious disobedience could cut the soul off from the free mercy of Jehovah. Man is rendered incapable by reason of his inherited depravity of saving himself or of doing meritorious works; but still, till sin separate him from God by a conscious and self-determined act of disobedience, he remains within the reach of a bought salvation. The essence of sin therefore is a willful separtion of the soul from the King of mankind and the Ruler of the thoughts. This definiton makes the apostacy of a believer possible

and gives room for our doctrine of back slidings and restorations, which has been so often carricatured and often misunderstood. Sin is the most fatal of human activities, as it sets up a frail and fallible judgment and power against an Omnipotent and All-Wise Intelligence, and seeks to rule not simply itself but all other things for its advantage. Our fathers held that every act of the mind or of the heart which sought an end out of God or contrary to his law was a sin, and that every such act severed the vital connections between God and the soul. Hence this life could be renewed only by the new contact of the soul and God. Sin to them was therefore the most terrible fate a man could fall into, not simply so much because of the punishment to be inflicted, as because of the death of a soul which it implied. As the branch cut off from the tree is dead, so the man cut off by his sin from Christ was dead, and death meant to them all that is hopeless, decaying, putrifying.

2. Another doctrine dear to us all and always stated by our ministers with joy and power is that of "free grace." So infinite is the sum of benefits derived from Christ and God that we may practically declare that all comes from Him; and so little can we do, so little have we and all men done in the line of helpful morality, that we may call it all nothing. Hence we say that we can do nothing to assist in bringing the new life of Jesus to the soul, or in keeping it alive in the heart. To simply open the mind and cherish a living desire for God, to long for his presence and turn from all temptation to set up our own will; to have a faith in God's goodness and power and to put the whole cause into the hands of Jesus, is all we can do. And then when the Saviour is offered, the soul is to receive him and remember that the believer is "born not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This grace, free as the air, is as universal as gravitation, and will lift every heart to holiness and righteousness, to Christ and his life, unless consciously rejected. We call it therefore free grace and proclaim it as the purchased heritage of the race, and we say it can only be forfeited by actual sin separating the soul from its Savior.

3. A third point of doctrine so fully emphasized by our pioneers is that of an atonement or sacrifice by suffering. It is an observed fact that even our common blessings, our daily advantages come to us from the toils and privations of others. They make sacrifices consciously and with design to provide opportunities for improvement and gain to others. Especially is this the case where human affection prevails. Here deliberate choice selects means and provides by its own pain for the joy of the beloved one. Very largely too is this the case even when there is no real choice of sacrifice or

suffering. Human life begins with the agony of another almost equivalent death. And the nurture and care and deprivation required of parents to support and educate a child to maturity, how great. Then note the revealed fact, coincident with this, that the life of toil and suffering, and the death of shame and despair of our Lord and Savior, have in some way purchased pardon and sanctification. Connect this with our doctrine of a divine life in the soul, or rather, base that doctrine on this sacrifice of Christ as its foundation, and we have the substance and glory of our Methodist theology, the sacrifical atonement by Jesus, the vicarious mediator and author of all salvation. Our preaching has always been vitalized by this. The Cross has stood in the foreground of every picture of hope we have drawn to set before the eyes of the perishing. It has hung as a sign in every heaven we have pointed men to, as a symbol of faith and conquest. Nothing but the Cross has been held up to the dying sinner's mind on which he could fasten and from which he could find a hope. We have never made it an idol as the Roman Church seems many times to do. We have never allowed ourselves to call the sufferings of the Savior penal, and hardly substitutional in any popular sense, but that they were vicarious, and that they do bring help and redemption in some marvelous and mighty manner, we have always believed and gloried in. These pains and sacrifices of a sinless Infinite One, who became our brother in the flesh, who still lives to impart to us, in a mysterious way, his own divine life and to beget us anew, are our standard themes in all our pulpits, and their power does bring us to God and enable us to endure and grow into all that "fullness of God" which has been our inspiration.

4. Our doctrine presses another point already mentioned. It is one of our vital dogmas and is to be defended at the peril of all else. Our ideas of conversion or regeneration, or the life of God implanted by the Holy Ghost in the soul, have always been our clearest, most emphatic, most frequent utterances. We have kept these statements ringing on the air in all our preaching and discussions, at our camp-meetings, at our conferences, in our Sabbath services, and in our weekly prayer and class meetings and love feasts. Clearly known conversion has been coupled with the glorious doctrine and the living practice of a perfect character of love and faith such as makes the human soul a "perfect man in Christ Jesus. We have insisted that this shall be known as to the time of its beginning and shall be as unmistakably felt as is the action of the mind itself. A man is to know that he does love God just as certainly as he knows that he loves wife or children ; and, what is sometimes regarded as a trifle mystical but which must still be maintained as a necessity, he

must also know that God loves and approves him just as surely as he knows that wife or child loves him. The love for God in his soul must be felt, and the answering love in God for him must be communicated to his soul; in other words, a conscious love in his heart must answer to the divine witnessing spirit which speaks intelligently to him. Wesley struck the key-note, and the whole line of the fathers sang with enthusiasm:

"The Father hears him pray,
His dear Anointed One,
He cannot turn away
The presence of his Son.
The Spirit answers to the blood
And tells me I am born of God.

My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for his child,
I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And Father, Abba, Father, cry."

This gives the fullness of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and it is the perfectness of love, the completeness of faith, the unhesitation of a perfect obedience that walks boldly to the precipice, if need be, and, while poising its uplifted foot over the mighty void, finds a great rock rising before it and making a highway for its triumphant march toward the kingdom of life. This is our doctrine of holiness. Let us bless Jehovah for it and maintain it with an earnest faith and a prayerful wisdom and prudence! The preaching of it has been one of our specialties. For our hundred years of ecclesiastical life the land has rung with it. Our pulpits defend it, our people claim to know it, and all our economy is redolent with its heavenly fragrance. Our doctrines of a new birth, sudden and known, thrilling the nature, the certainty that this is no act of man's, but the gift of God's free grace, and the belief that this new life is to be made perfect, to grow till the man becomes perfect in Christ, always in Christ, however,—all this our church has "steadfastly believed" and must believe to the end; and the proclamation of it, and more especially the living it, has it not changed the whole experience and practical Christianity of all the churches? It has taught them the power of a divine life. They have called it by other names, but they have cheerfully accepted the experience and termed it the "rest of faith," "the higher life," "assurance," and they hold it as an entire consecration, a sure confidence. Methodism, whatever else it has done or has not done, has made this doctrine of "scriptural holiness" the one universally believed and popular idea of Chris-

tianity. The believer is to trust to Christ, who is held to be a personal presence and a living, loving power, so fully that he is to rest in him without sin, to be blameless, united to him, and to be filled with love, conscious of Christ's sweet nature within him, full of his infinite tenderness and of the abiding blessedness of communion with him.

Such a doctrine of marvelous privileges, of such exalted dignity and spiritual exultation, naturally grew out of the life of the Divine Nature in the soul. When a man is born of God, has thus become a partaker of him, why may he not rise to any height of purity, strength and perfection of love and grace? Having Jesus, the anointed Savior, dwelling within him, why should he not "go on to perfection?" How can he do anything else than "expect to be made perfect in love in this life?" When God is love and lives in him, how can a consistent man count himself called to anything else than to holiness and all the fullness of that noble blessing?

These four points or doctrines of sin of regeneration of an atonement and of free grace or holiness, especially that of the new life, gave to our preachers a fresh positiveness, a new and sparkling interest, which actually astonished the people and attracted multitudes to hear a free gospel and listen to the audacious claims of men lately confessed to be sinners and now pretending to be perfect. It is simple enough to say that these early itinerants preached with power. They believed and therefore they spoke; when other men and preachers whispered in doubt, in fear and despair even,

"How can a sinner know
His sins on earth forgiven?
How can a gracious Savior show
My name inscribed in heaven?"

these people—men, women, children—lifted each his voice like a trumpet, and all together sang as when the seven thunders uttered their voices:

"What we have felt and seen,
With confidence we tell:
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible.

His love supassing far
The love of all beneath,
We find within our hearts and dare,
The pointless darts of death.

Stronger than earth or hell,
The sacred power we prove;
And conquerors of the world, we dwell
In heaven, who dwell in love."

This leads to the statement that the Methodist movement produced an outburst of religious song such as was never heard from the time "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," down to the days of our grand revival. Everybody sang, and sang hymns of which it seems to be no blasphemy nor even exaggeration, to say they are as truly inspired as is the xiii of Paul to the Corinthians. Our people sang them and read them and prayed in their words. They were for a long time our litany. The people had no scruple about the propriety of singing and no difficulty in measuring the tune or the time, though I have had modern choristers tell me the syllables do not accentuate well:

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done!"

It was their experience, and that old, old story was new to them, and true every morning and fresh every evening. This preaching, this singing, this experience-telling, led to a sociability which found expression in class-meetings and love feasts, and in a hospitality and religious visiting more valuable to the frontier than is often acknowledged. This promoted refinement and enlarged their ideas of the country and of the responsibility of citizens, and made them ready and able to be leaders. How many can remember the lordly hospitalities of the Methodists in St. Clair, Wabash, Lawrence, Madison and Crawford counties in this state? And the same were abundant in Indiana, Ohio and the East, and quite as princely were the welcomes and generous entertainments on the plantations of the South. This would remind us of Abraham, the friend of God, and his gentlemanly feast of the angels at Mamre; and it did a work for religion, for society, for the nation, which helped to make the East and the West one in spirit and in experience, and has been retained till the present day, as the sessions of our annual Conferences continually prove. The preachers of those days were commonly gentlemen born and bred, and they carried refinement, good manners, quick intelligence, neatness of personal habits and a noble manliness, to say nothing of the sweetness and light of piety, wherever they went. The backwoodsman and his family in their log cabin felt, when such men came among them, that they had a connection with the human race, the very noblest of it, and with the Lord of life and wisdom, with a whole Savior still alive too, and they struggled in poverty and loneliness to make themselves worthy of their high calling. To what prayer meetings did this lead, how did they make the Methodists of a region, for fifty miles around, one in

soul, in purpose, in doctrine, in faith, in zeal, in love and in power! They were a live people and they loved one another. Religion was a real life in them, as certainly known to every one of them as is the throb of the pulse at the wrist. It was a strange warmth about the heart, as Wesley himself said. They scorned the word "hope," then so common among christians of other churches, whose cant about "a hope indulged" was made the occasion of much boisterous, and sometimes improper ridicule. They did however speak often and exultingly of "hope." But it was not a hope of conversion nor of acceptance with God. That they *knew*. They had experienced the sweetness of that. They felt and knew the power of it. To "hope" for it was to them an absurdity. But the hope of a hereafter, the hope of seeing the Savior, of meeting the saints of all ages, and more particularly the hope of perfect love and the continuous joys of such an exalted state—such a hope they had, and it filled their songs with their highest raptures. How the woods echoed with the power of Christ while they sang:

"O glorious hope of perfect love!
It lifts me up to things above,
It bears on eagles' wings;
It gives my ravished soul a taste,
And makes me for some moments feast
With prophets, priests and kings."

Or that other of Charles Wesley's inspired hymns:

"O love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee?
I thirst, I faint, I die, to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me.

"God only knows the love of God;
O that it now were shed abroad
In this poor, stony heart!
For love I sigh, for love I pine,
This only portion, Lord, be mine,
Be mine the better part."

Thus they mingled prayer and praise, preaching, exhortation, doctrine and experience in those songs which they sang till their flesh and bones, their lips and tongues, and teeth too, knew them and could sing them without note or book. And they did sing them and shout them, and pray them at home and abroad, on Sabbath and work-day, in the house and in the field, till the very wilderness and solitary place were glad for them; till the eagles of the air knew them and the wolves of the forests fled scared by their power. This "hope of perfect love!" It filled them and entranced the world. May it never die in our hearts! And when they held up the other "hope" which has inspired the saints and martyrs of all ages—how

they sang of it, in the grandest of strains, which must have delighted the angels themselves, as they leaned over the jasper walls and listened to,

"Come on my partners in distress,
My comrades through the wilderness;
Who still your bodies feel;
Awhile forget your griefs and fears,
And look beyond this vale of tears,
To that celestial hill.

That great mysterious Deity
We soon with open face shall see;
The beatific sight
Shall fill the heavenly courts with praise,
And wide diffuse the golden blaze
Of everlasting light."

All this light and power, this confidence, assurance, exultation and song, how it filled the land with religious activity and helped most marvelously to carry our land through two of its great perils. The church was first organized in December, 1784, at the time when French infidelity was having its greatest popularity in this country, and the work done to counteract its poison was immense. Then unbelief was speculative, philosophical, negative, critical, sarcastic, sneering, doubting. It had affected almost all of the foremost men of our revolutionary times, excepting the Adamses, the Jays and the Livingstons. It emptied the churches of men and filled the taverns and spread a pall of darkness over the land from the battle of Saratoga down to the time of the beginning of our great American revival in 1816. There had been revivals under Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and the Tenants before the declaration of Independence, but their fires paled during the fierce ordeals of the war. During these years the little sparks of Wesleyan life were starting flames which after about 1819 set the continent in a blaze. Infidelity diffused death, but Methodism propagated spiritual life and did much to save virtue and truth. It took the ground that no mere morality could be sound or profitable unless based on religious life; and while it first proclaimed life, it then insisted on virtue. From the time of Wesley's first class-meeting rules it had borne a testimony against slavery, dram-drinking and tobacco-using in all their forms. It was truly the pioneer of the grand reformation of temperance, and on that question and the tobacco nuisance it is still far in the van of the whole reformatory forces of the age.

Another line in which Methodism has been mighty was to follow the trail of the pioneer and the emigrant and preserve him and his family from barbarism and heathenism. This topic would be a grand one for the application of a sermon like this. Methodism has

carried the life of Christ to that mighty tide of population which has overflowed this continent. These early itinerants of ours, these gentlemen saints, went with one work in their hearts and only one on their hands; but they were statesmen as well, and teachers, too, and builders of intelligence and character. So they took religious books and sold them everywhere, and there has grown from their desire and determination to circulate books filled with God's truth and descriptive of the Christian life, the largest book-making establishment on the globe—an establishment which makes the whole Methodist church the grandest agency for circulating a pure literature and for counteracting the pernicious influence of bad books the imagination of man can conceive. Those old men, far-seeing—nay, I recall the word, and yet only to affirm it in a nobler sense—those men a little blind to the difficulties in their way, but inspired by God to see beyond the mountain tops, built a publishing house that scatters knowledge almost as widely as the sun scatters his rays; and to it every preacher and Sunday-school superintendent is a bountiful hand to carry the sweetest, purest, noblest literature to the world. It is one of our marvels. No human mind can tell how much we have done for the world in this line.

In every movement to reform the morals, or to improve the manners, or promote the intelligence or power of men, our church has been the boldest aggressor on sin, and its members are everywhere among the forlorn hope of every benevolence, or advance campaign toward the upbuilding of right on earth. One thing which has contributed materially to this end has undoubtedly been our doctrine or belief concerning a call to the ministry. According to this, God calls and commissions men to-day as truly as the Master called and endowed the fishermen and carpenters of Galilee, to preach his gospel and to organize his church. Our early preachers believed that they were thrust out to proclaim truth and convert sinners; and they did cry aloud and spare not. They went asking no salary and making no complaint if they received not a penny. They shared the frugal fare of the pioneer, and, if for any cause, there was not enough of cash collected to enable them to live decently without incurring debt, they located at once, esteeming the lack of support an effectual shutting of the door against them. But while God gave them the hearts of the people and kept them in the field, they feared no man, and called everyone, everywhere to repentance and life. The doctrine of a divine call to the ministry is one we need to revive and emphasize. On it God's church is founded. A man's church may be founded on a self-called, or a church-called ministry. Men can attract to men, they can organize themselves. But all such com-

binations, or organizations, or corporations, with whatever sanction of nature, or law, or convenience they may have, are, after all, human institutions and can have no more than a human authority. But a man or woman created anew in Christ Jesus and made to be a living soul, and then called of God and commissioned by Him and directed by his spirit, is not a human attraction and wields not a human power. He does not form human institutions: He builds the kingdom of God and Christ, the kingdom of heaven, obedience, love, joy and peace in the earth. He brings a divine, a supernatural agency into the affairs of a sinful world and thereby introduces order and every good thing.

No man can enter our pulpits for gain without incurring the guilt of Simon Magus, nor can he innocently accept its duties with even a conscientious desire to do good and a reverent calculation that his talents are adapted to its work. No mere philanthropic ardor must move him to it. He must inwardly hear the divine voice calling him; he must see around him the imperious providences of God, commanding him to that labor; he must find the seal of the Highest on his work, approving and attesting his own desire. There must be a woe behind him, like the smoke of Sodom, a yearning within him, a signal above him like the cross in the sky, a promise before him like the mountain of Zoar, all urging him to preach the gospel of everlasting life if he would save his soul hereafter or have the peace of God in this life. This is our theory and it has been our practice from our beginning. God be praised! And if ever a man has entered our ministry without this high call he has been sadly mistaken, or has committed perjury. And the same must be said of the authorities of the church; if they admit him they have erred or sinned most grievously.

While we hold the call to the ministry high enough, it is not certain but that our practice falls below the standard of the fathers. Do not many of our preachers starve in the ministry and starve their families because they are not men of authority and power? Do they feel that God himself has sent them to find the lost sheep? They feed the sheep and the lambs, too, if they come to the fold of their own accord; but do they go into the wilderness and find those who go astray? They are capital servants at the Lord's marriage feast to wait on those who have heard and obeyed the first invitation. But how energetic are they to go out into the highways and hedges, in the thunder and the hail, and compel them to come in? The divine commission, the woe is me, ought to push us out as it did the fathers, to go after men, so that every man on the circuit, member of our church, or another, or of no church, should in some way and at

some time hear the divine call and feel the touch of the divine fire, not with the purpose altogether to make him a Methodist, but to make him live, to convert him to life, the life of love in God. The man thus called gathers Christ's sheep into Christ's fold, and not Methodist, nor Presbyterian, nor Baptist sheep into a sectarian pen. He works in the Lord's vineyard, and the clusters he finally gathers are for the wine to be drunk new with the Master in his own kingdom. Such a man, called by such a high calling, has authority, not to lord it over God's heritage, but to be a servant of the Most High and a worker together with him in building the temple in which all men are to worship. He labors not for a reward, but because he loves his Savior and his brethren.

Some of our usages have been peculiar, and have, as has been said, grown out of our doctrines. Perhaps the strangest of all has been our itinerant ministry. It cannot be eulogized or defended here. But that a class of men should surrender the idea of a permanent home and devote themselves to the wandering life, almost of a gypsy, and give up to another man the right to choose for them the annual place for their labor, and also should surrender to others the right to fix for them their compensation for that work and to exact services in unlimited measure, is a wonder. This has been going on for a hundred years and has been endured, even welcomed; and more than five hundred men every year enter our conferences on probation and joyfully accept it as a duty. Women, as wives, accompany them, share the sufferings and contribute in a large degree to the success of the work. Each year now sees an army—counting in, as we rightly do, the followers, ministers and families—of more than thirty thousand souls liable to break up all the sacred associations of home and friendship, of kindred and memory, and go among strangers simply to preach Jesus and to exemplify the power of a living Savior. Talk of the cessation of miracles. Here is one before you! And it has been one arm of our power. Do not weaken it; strengthen it if possible; but cut it off and half our power goes too. The Methodist church, by its ministry, has made great sacrifices and performed heroic labors. How often have the pioneers treaded the wilderness, following the trail of the explorer by the blazed trees!. They have encountered dangers of floods and wild beasts. Frosts and heats beat upon them; fevers and malarias lay in wait for them. The sun by day and the stars by night saw them shelterless and lonesome, hungry and destitute of all but Christ and their own indomitable courage. For years they wandered seeking the souls of men, to preach a gospel of free salvation, of mighty faith, and of the glorious redemption by Jesus. What are the results? A nation saved

from infidelity, a church of power organized and half a heaven almost filled with saints. But there is more than this, great as it is. It is a marvel; but there is more by far.

Our nation, at the public expense and with the plaudits of the world, has lately brought home the frostbitten remnants of the two hundredth expedition which has been sent in search of the north pole, or of a northeast passage to Asia. Nearly three hundred years have been spent in a vain attempt to penetrate the icy barriers of the north. Wonders of endurance and skill and foresight and energy have been displayed, and the end has baffled them all. They have come back mutilated, defeated, sickening, dying, apparently empty-handed, and we ask, what good has been gained? Science steps forward, and boldly balancing life against intelligence, affirms that every ship which rides the ocean is safer for the knowledge of the magnetic pole and the aerial currents and the glacial drifts which these men have learned and brought back with them. Every life which enters a vessel on the water is more secure for their toils and dangers. So when you ask what these men—these itinerant preachers—who have braved the perils of the forest and the mountain, of the torrent and the desert, who have suffered the privations of the homeless itinerancy, what they have done, what is the profit of their toil? religion, balancing spiritual life against formality, Christ's peace against death, answers: every child that is born has a more comfortable place in which to grow up and a more virtuous society in which to be nurtured; every man has a higher motive to be honest, and every woman a better security for character; every hamlet has a better opportunity to seek peace and to acquire learning; every village and city has a better law and a higher sentiment of right and duty; every sinner has a better chance to repent, and every Christian a better knowledge of salvation and a clearer call to a life of joy and peace, of sanctification and honor, than would have been possible without these itinerants, their labors and their sacrifices. Every church in the land is better to-day than it could have been if the Methodist Church had not been organized a hundred years ago. The world properly knows the perils encountered by the Arctic explorers, bnt how small were their real dangers is seen by the fact that less than two per cent. of them all perished in their voyages, and this includes Sir John Franklin and all his comrades. The real loss of life to men, women and children by the toils and hardships consequent on the annual removals of the Methodist ministers and their families, is annually almost as great as all the losses of all the Arctic expeditions put together; and the world, the church, religion herself, each affirms that it pays. Every other child of man

finds a better world, in which helplessness and innocence can thrive; and peace and joy, and truth and right are all brought nearer to their final triumph.

But this strain has probably already been pressed till the hearers are weary. There stands the church of our choice, chosen from among all others, because first of its glorious doctrines of life and perfection, of divine authority and power; and second, because of its marvelous history and influence. We can point to it as we do to the dome of the sky, and say God made it, and he has adorned it with the lives of the saints, with orators of almost angelic power, with deeds of heroism equal to the martyr age of the church. It is, as God has builded it, on the sure foundation. It is the mountain of the Lord's house, filled with all glory, and we look at it, and at its doctrines and its members, as we enumerate them all, and walk about them, simply to find occasion to stimulate our desire, to offer praise and adoration to God, the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as we exclaim "What hath God wrought!" "Marvelous are his works; in wisdom hath he made them all!" "He hath given us a goodly heritage." Let us be glad and praise only him!

We may not be allowed to close even a sermon of boasting and adulation—though this is not such—without, in old Methodist fashion, appending an exhortation to duty. Such an ending in such a presence would be as unorthodox and as untimely as for the Bishop to omit to ask the candidates for admission into conference those two strange questions, as others deem them: "Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?" "Are you groaning after it?" which last question some squeamish body has, I believe, persuaded our General Conference to smooth for the tongue of our Bishops into rhetorical jelly thus: "Are you striving earnestly after it?" Do not let us be afraid of the old form of question so long as we read that the spirit helpeth our infirmities with "groanings that cannot be uttered." And so, my brethren, I beseech you, "suffer a word of exhortation," according to apostolic usage.

1. Never leave a member or a probationer till he *knows* that he is converted, till, according to all our history, traditions and beliefs, he knows that he is filled with the life of Christ, till he burns with inextinguishable blaze. It is an immense danger that we incur when we take a seeker, having only a desire to flee from the wrath to come, into our church as a probationer. In such a case we take one who is not alive at all, and join him to a living body. We need caution, or we may repeat the experience of the unconverted Paul, and find ourselves joined to a body of death. A fire is just as completely extinguished by an abundance of fuel heaped upon it in dis-

order, as by water. But let the brands you bring to it be all ablaze, and no matter what be the amount or order, they then add fire to fire. The only way to avoid this danger is to make the church a place to convert men, as well as a place to enjoy and get dignity. And it will do us good to remember that the church can exert her full force far better within her pale than out of it. But she must never let a soul rest till fully converted. It is only a little thing to get a probationer to join a vigorous, active, sympathizing, helpful church. That is only a short step, and it may be only toward formalism. When it has been taken, then our great work begins. Let never one probationer be left till he is converted and knows it. He is near the minister, near the church, near to Christ. Get him converted with power, let him be born again, and then let the critics and the cynics and the doubters, and the lovers of the Lord Jesus, ask, if they will, "What becomes of the probationers?" When they are converted your answer will be, as you read over your list written up, "This man and that man was born there." The conversion of every seeker will be the antidote for a superficial revival. It will stop all cavil, and will build the kingdom of Christ in truth.

2. And when men and women are converted, stick to them and build them up in the faith and the practice of all duty. For often we treat our converts as though we were ashamed of them, and so we leave them to be foundlings at the doors of the neighboring churches, or we act toward them as the amphibians to their young, never feed or brood them. Every convert needs a Christian nurture, and we should give this to every one born at our altars by our labors. We ought to bind them to us with hooks of steel, with kind brotherly love, with a mother's tenderness and a father's gentle authority, so that escape is impossible. If the Methodist Church had held its converts as well even as other churches do, she would probably have at least three times as many members as now, and the very effort to hold them, as I have indicated, by getting them thoroughly converted and indoctrinated, would have given us a far stronger piety than we now have. We sometimes repel by our pride of numbers and by our pride in our usages, and many a time by the ignorance of our unformed, illiterate, ill-mannered preaching. Now and then I have seen a man who thought himself called of God to preach, whose chief evidence of such a call seemed to the world to be a total misconception of his office, and who seemed to think the power to abandon modesty was a sign of grace and wisdom, and the only way to show his authority was to fall to beating the man servants and the maid servants. Indeed, I believe this latter plan is one of the specifics for getting up a revival of some

evangelistic tramps who aspire to conduct, as they say, revivals, who travel and "get up" "protracted efforts" at fifty dollars a week. And these revivals "got up" in this way, get down quicker than boys' kites when the strings break. Let our ministers do the thorough work of converting with the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, with the patience of love itself, and with the untiring energy of him who neither slumbers nor sleeps, and our converts will not only abide in the church which gave them birth, but they will make her "as a city without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein." Her sons and daughters shall fill the valleys and overspread the plains and cover the hills like the heavenly hosts themselves, an innumerable company which no man can number.

3. Again, let us not forget that conversion, regeneration, the new creature, is but a beginning of life, and that our instantaneously attained perfection is only another name for a very small blessing, compared with the maturity of grace to which daily communion with God can attain. "To be a Methodist in early times," says Dorothy Fairfax, "was to be rapt in devotion and rich in experience." It was to talk with God, to walk with him, to dwell with him, to grow in him as a grafted shoot grows into a tree. We are in danger here again, I fear. We must distinguish sharply between birth into the kingdom and growth in that kingdom, between the fullness of love as a state attained by faith and the character strengthened, established by abiding in God. For admission to the state of peace, joy and righteousness only faith is required; but to build the habit and character of righteousness, time is an element. Birth is instantaneous; character comes only after struggle and conflict. Life is from life, and its element or germ must begin suddenly, when it touches what is to be made a new life. Then comes a period of growth, longer or shorter, according to the dignity of its position in the scale of being. And finally, the life, whatever it is, assumes an independence for itself, and acts its part in the grand economy of nature or the universe. For growth, for character, for wisdom, for spiritual development, time is an essential element, and we shall hurt ourselves as a church if we ignore it, in our eagerness to emphasize the mighty power of God shown, as we insist, in instantaneous or sudden conversion and in immediate sanctification. A child grows, a scholar grows, a saint grows, a preacher grows, and we must not forget that growth of religious character can only be in time. Life begins in a germ and requires time to develop its power and attain its results.

Sometimes even the dead matter with which we are to build requires time also to get itself perfected or fully made, as in case of the cement which holds our bricks and stones together. It needs to dissolve and then harden. Builders have for ages wondered at the enduring nature of the Roman cement which is now found in houses at Rome, built in the time of Augustus. That cement is so much better than any thing modern art knows, that a reward of thousands of dollars was offered for a knowledge how to make it. But the other day in digging at Herculaneum the workmen found the recipe for it written on the face of a wall. And all the secret of it is, "let the lime and sand be mixed and remain three years before using." The lime is thus dissolved, and the whole becomes perfectly hydrated, so that water, lime and sand are united into one substance. Age or time is the transforming force in this as in fruits and in characters also. So while we continue to demand sudden conversions and look for instantaneous sanctifications, let us also demand for our christians, and especially for our ministers, a maturity of character, such as shall make them men in Christ, and not babes. You can make a convert, a neophyte, a prosolyte in an hour or less, but for the real saint to be made and to grow, it will probably need forty years. But when the saint is made you have the noblest work of God. And when a church is full of saints, it is worth the while of the world to note the fact and honor the work. It is not quite certain but we have neglected this important element of Christian growth or nurture, and have seemed to act as though the mere regeneration and sanctification of the soul were enough, or more properly, to state it in other words, our usage seems to imply that a soul having once tasted the heavenly gift and been made a partaker of the Holy Ghost could never fall away; the blessedness of life is so sweet, the power of the world to come is so mighty, that whoever feels the thrill of life divine will never give it up, but with his bodily life. And so we leave the work of building the soul or character to accident. We forget that one real example of virtuous living is worth more than a dozen prosolytes. Our organization on the plan of an itinerant ministry, our habit of preaching, our doctrine of conversion, all fit us specially for revival work, and there has always been danger that we should press forward in this line, neglecting the other one of character-building. We have done well to remember for ourselves and to remind the world that nothing can take the place of this life of God in the human soul. The one primal, indispensible condition of salvation and of growth in virtue and godliness is the new creature. Without this the man is dead—a lump of clay. When this life enters the nature, then a

christian can be nurtured, a state of righteousness can be maintained. And it is proper to say here that our system of class meetings, our love-feasts, our quarterly meetings, our prayer meetings, with their songs and testimonies, with their experiences told and believed, with altar work and individual exhortations and persuasions, are all adapted to building character; and whenever we have neglected this we have failed in our most available line.

4.. There is one other sign of the times we shall do well to heed. A question or two will hint it. Are our people in love with class meetings and social prayer as formerly? Have we not rather put these on the defensive? When an institution thus stands to repel attacks it is losing its hold in some way. When slavery began to defend itself, it was doomed beyond redemption. Dram-drinking is now in the same position. Our methods must not stop to parley or defend. They must go forward and deliver blows. Every agency we have ever used is as available to-day as in the good old times of the fathers. And our wisdom is to show the value and power of each by using it with a new vigor. The warrior who stops to argue the temper or beauty or the utility of his sword will assuredly lose his battle. But when he smites his enemies to the death, then he shows the value of his weapons and his own prowess at the same time.

There is a sort of doubt whispered vaguely in the air, and heard as sometimes a coming storm is heard, more by an ominous stillness than by sound, whether our church has not lost in some way, at least a part of its power. The question implies danger, and the method to avoid such a danger is to push into the thickest of combat, to be as aggressive as ever, and to take hold of every one of our well tried agencies and use them to their utmost. Do not let the power of our preaching fail, nor its personal point be blunted for any rhetorical glitter, or logical exactness, or literary polish of the sermon, written in the leisure of the study and read in the pulpit, with all the oratorical graces acquired before the mirror, or under the drill of the elocutionist. Do not let the social, pastoral, godly intercourse between preacher and people become disused, and remain a memory and a myth, for any desire of reading, or learning, science, or lecturing, or writing. Do not omit the work of the ministry for any secular employment whatever. If you are compelled to secular work, let another take your office. Preach the word as all your work; preach publicly and privately; preach with your whole soul, and energy and time, or quit, and let the Master call another. Never fear but he will take care of you if you act with common prudence, so long as he wants you in the ministry. Never you fear about one

of our usages, or institutions, or methods, so long as you apply it with vigor and prayer. Some people fear that Methodism is losing its power. Some of its members, some of its preachers are losing power. There is no doubt about that. So it has always been; men lose power and even die. But Methodism is a force in the world greater than ever, and it is destined to grow, no imagination can tell how mightily. Tennyson sang for the brook:

> "Men may come and men may go,
> But I go on forever."

Weak minds fear for the church. It is losing its prominence, but not its power. Formerly it was the one institution of the world, greater than the nation or than kingdoms and empires. Now the school and the market, the corporation, the society, the convention and the congress have risen into prominence and even threaten to overshadow it. Nay, it is greater than ever. Its visible magnificence has in a large measure vanished, its ability to strike the senses is less, its pomp and pageantry are indeed diminished. But there has always been danger that these would be mistaken for its living power, and that men's minds, and hearts too, would rest in them and not apprehend the essence underlying them. Even the Bible—so boldly is it criticised—is a subject of fear, lest it should be forgotten, or grow to be an unfashionable book of myths and obsolete histories and songs. It is too true to human nature to be outgrown or forgotten. There is danger that men may under estimate it, to be sure. But we must remember that religion lived and grew before there was any Bible; and some of the most interesting and pious of the saints, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, proved themselves worthy of everlasting honor without it. Even Moses lived eighty years without it, till Jehovah gave him authority to begin it. We hold that it is to abide and be the delight of ages to come as of ages past, to be the instructor of the children as it has been of the fathers. But is there not more danger of making it an idol than of losing it? Religion is greater than its book, for it was before it, and religion made it. Christ is greater than the little imperfect—so St. John intimates—history written in scraps by the four evangelists. Great as the Bible is, Jesus is infinitely greater, and religion rests on him as its corner stone. And even he found it expedient to go away, lest men should make him a king, that is, an idol, to be worshipped before God. The Roman Church to-day worships his cross, his human mother, the sacrament of his supper, and if the body of Moses or of Jesus had not been hidden, we might to-day have been bowing down to them as objects of worship. This English Bible of ours is the

noblest book of the ages and of the universe. But Christ, and not it, is the bread of life. And Christ, as we shall do well to remember, has promised to come and teach us. Let us take him as the bread of life and feed the people with him, with his words, the few of them which the Bible has preserved; with his life as his acts and sacrifices have revealed it; with his spirit as he gives it to us; especially with his love as he fills us with it; with his life as he joins us to him and sends it through our souls. Do not let us worship anything but God and his Son, our Savior. Honor the Bible, revere Christianity, glorify religion by a godly life, and die for all these and for religion if need be, but worship only God. All along the battle line, where we are fighting for the church, for the Bible, for Methodism, for religion herself, there is a trembling of fear lest infidelity or atheism should triumph, lest somehow all our hopes should perish, or the church, or the Bible, or religion should get injured in the fight. Never, in the least, fear for these. Men may be wounded, killed even, but religion never. All that is human in the Bible may perish in the fierce heat of the controversy, and if there is a human element, not joined indissolubly to the divine, be sure that it will be burned out. All of man's work about the church may be destroyed, indeed must be; creeds may be disallowed and dogmas may be discarded, but not a jot or a tittle of God's truth and law will be removed. Infidelity, atheism, materialism, pantheism, science, evolution, each and all may mislead men and delude them to death, but religion they cannot touch. She is spiritual and incorporeal, and not one of their weapons can reach her. She is Truth—the Truth—and nothing can hurt her. Our Christian ministers often allow themselves to forget this vital distinction between religion and its formulated creeds, between its essentials and its accidents. It is love and life, the love of God and man, God's life in the soul; and a creed has no more to do with it than the voice of a man has to do with his life. Do you not know you may cut off arms, eyes, ears, teeth, tongue and flesh, surgeons cannot tell yet how much, and leave the man alive? So we may cut off creeds, dogmas, usages, ordinances, institutions, biblical texts even, we know not how much or how many, and leave religion alive. It may be duty to fight for every one of these as a man would for his eyes, but if they get to be idols, as is possible, we must cut them off and cast them from us. "It is better that one of the members should perish than that the whole body should be cast into hell." Let a creed go, let an institution go, let an interpretation go, but never let the life of God in the soul go; never let Jesus, the indwelling Savior, go. One of our Bishops has recently said: "The grip of

religion has been loosened."* With all deference I must protest that he has used a wrong word altogether. Not religion, but men's notions of it; not religion, but the creed which men have framed to express their little ideas of it; not religion, but the form in which men have tried to embody it. I am aware that these notions, these ideas, these creeds, these forms, are all that some men have of religion, and when anybody carries them off, they cry in bitterness, with the selfish Laban, "Ye have stolen my gods;" and they leave flocks and home and pursue the marauders, not thinking that an idol, or a visible image, or a form of words, may come between God and the soul and be death, and that therefore they should be thankful to any one who will seize them and cast them to the moles and bats. Religion lost its grip on this world! Never, while God is King and Christ is the Savior of men, the One mighty to save! When religion, which is life, as I have to-day insisted, and as the grand discourse from which I quote the sentence argues, with far greater force than any of my words can have, when religion loses its grip on this world the planet will be a wreck and will float in space as insignificant and as aimless as the dust, which scientists say Krakatoa sent from its crater a year ago to cumber the upper air of this earth; useless only as it causes the eastern and western skies to burn with purple beauty when the sun approaches them. Let religion lose its grip and it will be worse for man than if the fires of the sun were put out. It has not lost its grip, I protest before all creation. "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel."

My Brothers, it is our duty to hold this religious life up before the world as its only hope. First, to make our own souls, by God's free grace, the temples of the living God—living temples—examples of Christ's life, radiant with love, strong in consecrated faith, and glorious in purified character. Then are we fit to be servants and to be honored with the Master's commission. We must labor to make every member of the church such as this, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. After this we may glory in Methodism. We do boast of it. We need not. All we need do is to point to it. There it stands. In presence of Niagara or Mount Shasta you need no guide-book description; each speaks its own eulogy. You need

* Centennary Thoughts, page 85. I know the tone of the book is very inconsistent with the sentence quoted, and I only regret the expression because I would not have so beautiful a work of art marred by a single blemish; so powerful an argument weakened by a single unfortunate admission; so grateful a vase of ointment affected with even the trace of a single fly.

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not praise the sun on the meridian. So our church wants no commendation. She came into existence just before Watt gave the steam engine its power, and has been a moral and religious force, keeping pace with all the wonderfully mighty civilizing forces and agencies of the English-speaking race. Along with the growth of her spiritual power, which has revolutionized all religious thought and activity, physical forces have been revolutionizing every form of industry. About the time of her importation to America, science began, with Priestly, to analyze and experiment and rearrange knowledge, till scarcely a dogma of the scientific creeds is now held as then. But amid all changes of physical machinery and scientific theory our church has held to the one doctrine and the one practice, the necessity of the new birth and the blessedness of perfect trust and entire consecration to God. Millions have been her converts. Millions on earth lift up their hands and praise her, and millions more in heaven glory in her power. She has grown in the midst of the battles of the giants—science and education — materialism and and philosophy, doubt and denial, criticism and agnosticism, spiritualism and diabolism, too. To-day her bark rides the ocean as proudly and as safely as the ship on Galilee in which the Master himself was sleeping. We need have no fear for her. She is a part of the great religion of God and humanity. She will live; her millions will multiply. God is in the midst of her and he will help her. But how about ourselves, brothers? Do we live? Is Christ Jesus in us, the life and the truth? Skepticism and criticism may shake our foundations of creed and of character; and if we are not full of faith we may perish by it, but the church and her Lord they will never touch. Let us be sure the church is in us—not simply we in the church—that Christ himself—not simply a belief concerning him—is in us, and then may we sing:

"Who in the Lord confide
And feel his sprinkled blood,
In storms and hurricanes abide,
Firm as the mount of God."

As we ask: "What hath God wrought?" and answer by pointing to the stars and say, like these in number and in glory to shine forever, have been our converts, our deeds and our triumphs, we may lift our hearts and pray, trusting Christ, that all we have done may be but a single ray of light in the dawning compared to the full-orbed glory of the sun which tips the mountains with the coming flood of day!